

NED CALONGE: I'm Ned Calonge, I'm the President and CEO of The Colorado Trust. I want to invite, welcome you to the final Health Equity Learning Series presentation of the 2018-2019 session. Now we are currently planning what happens next so I don't want that to sound really final but, uh, for this cycle, this is our last talk.

Our vision at The Trust is that all Coloradans should have fair and equal opportunities to lead a healthy, productive life regardless of race, ethnicity or where we live. It's a vision of health equity and one that we and others have begun to recognize is achievable through a variety of strategies. And one of those notable strategies is community organizing.

Our speaker tonight is the latest in a group of accomplished presenters on this exact subject. One of our past speakers, Doran Schrantz, who was the executive director of ISAIH in Minnesota, defines community organizing as, "a set of disciplines and strategic practices to build democratic and collective power, to assure the conditions in which a community or communities can thrive."

Another past speaker, University of Southern California professor Manuel Pastor, recently has observed that community organizing is now more than ever really about community building. In a paper published in Health Affairs last year, Professor Pastor wrote that community organizing can be, "a vehicle for unleashing the collective power necessary to uproot socioeconomic inequities at the core of health disparities."

One of the words both Doran Schrantz and Manuel Pastor have in common, is their comment, in their comments is the word power. Building power is key to achieving health equity, and I will tell you, drives most of the work at The Colorado Trust across Colorado.

Our speaker this evening, Andrea Cristina Mercado, has spent her career focused on helping communities across the country build such power. And then to use it to advocate for better policies and better health for themselves and for their families. Building power, including through community organizing, is also an important way to increase democratic participation and a sense of belonging among people. Andrea uses community organizing and other tools to combat nationalism and white supremacy culture. She has much to teach us about how to do this effectively and in a sustainable way, and we're looking forward to learning from her this evening.

We will email you an evaluation survey after today's presentation, so please keep an eye out for it. Know that we read every survey response, they're vital to help us plan and prepare these events in the future. We will post materials on this talk on our website after tonight, including complete video coverage. The video often takes a couple weeks for us to finalize and post, and it will be available in Spanish voice-over dialogue. We try to get any written materials shared, uh, up on the website sooner. I need, I request you silence your cell phones if you haven't done so already.

I want to acknowledge our grantees for the 2018-2019 Health Equity Learning Series. Tonight's event is being recorded, and these organizations will be hosting viewings of this recording in communities across Colorado. The presentation viewings will all be accompanied by professionally facilitated discussions, and I thank our facilitators for that. Additionally, I want to highlight the six grantee organizations whose names are in bold on the slide. These comprise our inaugural class of our Community Leaders in Health Equity track. In addition to hosting event viewings, staff from these organizations and other community members are taking part in an intensive 18-month curriculum focused on health equity education and awareness. This is a significant time commitment, and I applaud them for dedicating the effort and energy to be part of it. I see some folks in the room who are part of it.

Applause

NED CALONGE: If you are interested in finding a viewing, a facilitated discussion near you, please visit the Health Equity Learning Series on our website. There is an interactive map that will locate the grantee in Colorado closest to you along with their contact information, and these events will take place around the state starting in a few weeks.

What a nice picture.

I'm so pleased to introduce you to Andrea Cristina Mercado, our speaker this evening. She is executive director of the New Florida Majority and the New F--, and the New Florida Majority Education Fund. She's the daughter of immigrants from South America who made south Florida home. She's been organizing in Communities of Color and immigrant communities for more than a decade. Andrea's one of the co-founders of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and she led the California Domestic Worker Coalition, a statewide effort to include domestic workers in labor laws, which successfully passed legislation in 2013 that created a domestic worker bill of rights. While she was director of campaigns at the National Domestic Workers Alliance, seven states passed similar legislation. She went on to lead nationally recognized campaigns for immigrant and worker rights such as We Belong Together and the 100-woman, 100-mile pilgrimage for migrant dignity. She was the political director and lead organizer at Mujeres Unidas y Activas, a grassroots Latina immigration women's organization in the San Francisco Bay area for eight years, organizing around domestic violence, immigrant rights and economic justice.

Previously . . . she did something on a page I don't have . . . She lived in Brazil and worked on sustainable agriculture and farm workers' rights projects. She is raising her daughters in south Florida, and she is fighting for their future. Please help me in welcoming Andrea Cristina Mercado to the stage.

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: Good evening.

AUDIENCE: Good evening.

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: You can do a little better than that. Good evening!

AUDIENCE: Good evening!

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: Alright. Thank you so much for the invitation to speak. When The Colorado Trust reached out and, and Gwyn reached out to invite me to come talk about nationalism, the theme that came to me most, uh, was really to talk about belonging. Coming from a state where the ACLU recently issued a, a travel advisory for immigrants and, um, People of Color as a result of new racial profiling laws passed by our statehouse. So who's in and who's out, and who belongs and who doesn't, is heavy on my mind and my heart.

Belonging is a word that, word that's found itself at the center of the work that I've done for close to 20 years. But I really didn't have any idea that it was such a central focus in public health where social scientists have actually created scales and ways to measure belonging in students, in adults, in hospital patients, and that the results, the, the amount to which somebody feels like they can belong, they belong or not, determine a whole world of health and learning outcomes.

For, for women, for many People of Color and anyone who's ever experienced imposter syndrome, we can kind of know this on, like, a deep individual level. We're constantly asking ourselves--and constantly being challenged--to see if we belong. In our roles, in our power, in the ways that we lead.

To belong is to be secure. In your sense of place and to know yourself to be part of something, to be free of negative stereotypes. This past weekend being Mother's Day, I've been reflecting a lot on motherhood and belonging. And what, what propels somebody to leave the only home they've ever known. Everything that's familiar. Familiar food, your family, the landscape, um, and uproot. And migrate. And for so many it's our commitment to our children. Creating an opportunity for them to belong to another set of economic and educational possibilities.

My mother's from Argentina, my dad's from Peru. And my grandmother was widowed actually when my mom--um, she was two and my uncle was an infant--and my grandmother decided to, to be able to support her family to come to the United States and work as a nanny. And she left my mother behind. And that experience, like, profoundly shaped my mother's life and made her who she is and has left a, a, a real mark on mine.

I was born in the U.S. I'm Peruvian and Argentinian American, and I started organizing in immigrant communities, I started organizing actually in college, with somebody over here, and started organizing in immigrant communities almost 20 years ago. And I didn't really see it as a career but more something that I just kind of fell into. I loved being in community and supporting, uh, immigrant women in particular, navigate a new system and a new culture, new laws.

And at, at 22 I found Mujeres Unidas y Activas. An organization of immigrant women in the San Francisco Bay Area that organized essentially support groups for immigrant women. They happened every week at the same time, same place. There was child care and coffee, um, and, and some bread and many of these women were undocumented. Many of them were experiencing or had experienced domestic violence. Many worked in jobs that were being paid low wages and enduring wage theft, sexual harassment and abuse on the job.

And as they come together to, like, sit in a circle, you know, on some folding chairs, they would share their stories with one another. And a lot of tears. There was always Kleenex boxes, and, and laughter and joy. But as they shared their experiences, I watched as they would realize that they weren't alone. And there were so many similarities between different stories and experiences. And as they went through these self-esteem courses that were taught by immigrant women and leadership trainings that were led by immigrant women, they grew stronger and more confident. As this, like, deep sense of belonging took hold.

And I witnessed, like, time over time it was, like, such a gift to witness, like, women who came through the door so broken and, like, emerge, like, so strong in, in themselves. Ad--, advocating for themselves and for one another and, like, really radiating joy and deep purpose.

You know, my job as a community organizer was to do some civic en--, engagement education, a little bit of history, of civil rights movements in the United States and the three branches of government and support these women in advocacy campaigns to really elevate, like, the unique experiences and challenges that they were facing. The importance of interpretation in hospitals. Um, workplace rights for nannies and house cleaners. And immigration reform.

And it was at one of those meetings that I met Norma. And Norma was a young woman with a four-year-old boy named Brian. With his big eyes. And, and Norma came to, into our office sharing how after her husband hit her one too many times, and she was scared for her life, she decided to call the police. And she was terrified, but she made the call. And she didn't speak much English, and when the police came, her husband's, like, smooth English convinced the officers that it was a, a mutual spat and regardless the police officers decided to arrest both of them.

And because Norma was undocumented, her arrest was what turned her over to immigration officials who started her deportation proceedings. And we fought for Norma. We submitted letters on her behalf. We knew that if Norma was deported, not only would it separate her from her son Brian indefinitely, but it would send a chilling message to women in situations of domestic violence or survivors of crime, that if anyone in their home was undocumented, that they better not call the police.

When Norma was released with an ankle monitor, she became the spokesperson for policy change and critical to passing the California Trust Act, which limited police collaboration with immigration officers. There are women like Norma all across this country who are being trapped

in deportation proceedings, who are afraid to call the police. Because these policies are being maligned from the White House on down, contorting the word “sanctuary” into a dirty word.

A community’s ability to call the police, to pick your children up from school without fear, to go to work and make an honest living, should be held sacred. Actually, on my way over here I was trying to call one of my “sheroes,” Jeanette. Um, Jeanette had been caught up in the deportation machinery here in Colorado after a routine traffic stop. And she spent 86 days in sanctuary in a church in 2017 before receiving a temporary reprieve. And her struggle was elevated by Time Magazine. And I actually didn’t know when I was trying to put a call into her today, that as of March 15 of this year, her deportation stay ran out, and she is once again in that church, at the First Unitarian Church here in Denver. And there’s so many people that have told her, like, ‘Jeanette, like, give up,’ and ‘you should just go to your home country.’ And her public persistence is a reminder of the kinds of sacrifices that mothers make for their children.

I live in Florida. And in Florida, one in five Floridians are immigrants from another country. But in our state we have almost a million snowbirds who come every winter and leave every spring. So if you really, like, analyze the numbers, I think it’s more like only one in three Floridians are actually born in the state. You know many of us come from other states and other parts of the country. So who belongs in a state where the majority is from somewhere else?

After Hurricane Maria, uh, more than a million Puerto Ricans were displaced, after the island was totally devastated. And one central Florida elected official responded, not with a welcome center and, and not with a jobs fair or housing information. Um, he said, “We have to get them back to the island as soon as possible before they change the makeup of the state.” Does he feel the same way about the 3% of Floridians from Illinois? Or the 3% from Ohio? Or the 4% from Pennsylvania? I’m willing to guess not.

And so we begin to move a little bit more close to what’s actually behind the immigration debate. You don’t hear about caravan of elders coming in waves and swarms or droves to the fine state of Florida. In this last election cycle in 2018, we had one candidate running for governor who was the first Black man running for governor in a state that was part of the Confederacy. And again and again, like, his main talking point is that he was running for anyone who’s ever been told they don’t belong.

And the other candidate campaigned with TV ads showing his infant daughter how to build a wall. Wall-building won, and he’s about to sign into law one of the worst anti-immigrant bills in the, in the country that will have police defy the Constitution and conscript them into the deportation force and override city policies and turn every checkpoint, st--, stop sign into a checkpoint. Creating thousands more Normas and Jeanettes.

But I think what’s interesting is, like, this election animated, like, historic turnout. Like, if you look at the numbers of people coming out in Florida, passion was running high on all sides. And what gives me hope is, like, the fact that the difference between wall-building and a state where we all

belong, was less than 1%. Like in a state with over 20 million people, it was less than 30,000. And I think that says a lot about where we are as a divided nation.

But before I returned to Florida, I was the campaign director--as, as Ned was mentioning--for the National Domestic Workers Alliance, it's an organization that represents nannies and eldercare workers and house cleaners. Um, and he already gave it away. The campaign was called We Belong Together. And we meant it both as the more perfect union our country could become, like, as the beloved community that our civil rights forebears envisioned. And on a very concrete level, we were talking about immigrant families.

And after the humanitarian crisis of family separation at the border, the campaigns actually changed its name to Families Belong Together. And three quarters of immigrants to this country are women and children. So we focused on documenting, like, the human rights crisis in states like Arizona, that were passing really repressive anti-immigrant laws. And trauma created by deportation when children have their mothers effectively disappear. They come home from school, and she's just not there.

Millions of immigrant women who are, like, the fabric of our communities and our workplaces and our schools are really blocked from achieving their full potential because of failed immigration policy. And meanwhile, in such challenging conditions, they manage to perform really essential jobs. Taking care of our aging parents, growing our food, starting businesses . . . central to family and community well-being.

So when Pope Francis announced his visit to the United States in 2015 after making headlines for tending to refugees on the streets of Rome and speaking out against the mistreatment of, of migrants from Africa, I organized 100 women to walk a pilgrimage. To meet him. Inspired by his message of compass--, compassion towards migrants. And we decided to actually start at, uh, the York immigration detention center. It's in the middle of Pennsylvania. And outside those walls, Pilar told us about how her husband carried out a 17-day hunger strike, to be freed and returned to her and their little girls. And then Ana held up her shoes before our first steps. And they were actually the first pair of shoes that she had worn when she crossed the desert with her children 12 years before, and she had kept them in the back of her closet all of those years.

And before we took off walking--we were 100 women, about to walk 100 miles--she shared that she was gonna wear the shoes that she had gotten lost in, in the desert. Running with her children in her hands, to keep them alive. And that she, those would be the sneakers that she wore as she fought to keep them together now.

We were grandmothers and mothers and children from all walks of life, just putting one foot in front of the other, through small towns and large cities to share a message of love and compassion. And four years later I don't really think that any of us could have predicted that anti-immigrant sentiment, um, would be a cornerstone in competing visions for our country.

Florida for all versus a very narrow few. White nationalism versus diversity, or multiracial democracy.

Instead of scapegoating immigrants for extreme economic inequality and wage stagnation, can we actually invest time into developing inclusive economies? Instead of demonizing immigrants as criminals, can we be that passionate about ending child poverty and expanding mental health services and developing solutions to mass alienation and gun violence? These are some of the most critical questions of our time.

The nationalist right is on the rise, not in the U--, just in the U.S., but it's a worldwide phenomenon. In five governments in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, it's entered the German parliament for the first time since the 1930s. It's obtained 38% of the vote in France. It's become the second largest party in the Netherlands. It's risen to power in Italy. And there's what we're experiencing in the U.S. And in none of these countries is the public perception of immigrants in sync with the truth.

A recent National Bureau of Economic Research Study surveyed 22,500 people from different social and political segments in the U.S., France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK. And it asked them all a simple question: "What share of your country's population do immigrants make up?"

Americans believe that legal immigrants constitute 36% of the total population. The real proportion is 10%. And American respondents have similarly exaggerated ideas about undocumented immigrants, who don't represent more than 3.5% of the population.

There are real policy challenges. The reality is it's not as easy to migrate legally to the U.S. as it was 40 years ago, when my parents migrated, even though our need for our immigrant workforce remains the same. Family reunification is arguably, like, the cornerstone of the American immigration system and families remain the cornerstone of our society. And despite this, the backlogs in our immigration process force families to wait sometimes decades to be reunited. The average wait time for a permanent resident to sponsor an unmarried son or daughter from Mexico or sister from the Philippines is over 20 years.

And there are other popular myths, like immigrants in fact contribute more in taxes than they receive in government benefits. It's undisputable. Contributing over \$11 billion in taxes every year. The U.S. economy is actually performing strongly enough to absorb immigrant workers. And immigrants are key to offsetting, uh, falling birth rate, which causes problems for governments around the world.

The reality is that diversity supports economic and social growth. And there are clearly many citizens who feel left behind by demographic changes. We need elected leaders to stop saying that immigrants and refugees represent an economic burden--which is simply untrue--and unpack how some industries benefit by having a large, undocumented, second-class citizens as

workers. We need leaders to examine cultural fears. To push back against “us versus them” nationalism and explore how to make our society more inclusive.

But this is an argument that’s been going on for generations. What is America? Is it a white, Christian nation? Or is it a country that, where all of us belong? Bring me your tired, your hungry, your weak? So you can see, like, whether it’s in the moment of the woman in an abusive situation in California needing to be able to call for help. Whether it’s women currently migrating to the U.S. seeking asylum from unheard-of violence and unspeakable poverty. Or women cleaning homes in isolation from each other and at heightened risk of verbal or sexual abuse.

What’s being debated is not the minutiae of immigration policy--how many years it should take, merit, locations for asylum. Like, that’s fundamentally not the debate that we’re having, it’s not a policy solutions debate. We’re not debating fiscal policy for the best provision of services or the style of education or forms of housing. No, we’re debating who belongs in this country. Fundamentally, who is this country for. And that’s a question as old as the Langston Hughes poem that says, “America never was America to me.”

It’s reaching a new and different fever pitch. The philosophy of white nationalism, the belief that national identity should be built around white ethnicity, and that white people should maintain a demographic majority and dominance in the nation’s culture and public life. It’s not just an idea that’s, like, rearing its head, it’s emerged from chat rooms into the streets of Charlottesville, into shootings in Charleston and New Zealand and Pittsburgh and San Diego. And the mail bomber from south Florida--my home--who used the same post office that kept thousands of mail-in ballots from being counted in our midterm elections.

It’s a dangerous ideology that’s infiltrating all levels of our government. And this narrow vision of who belongs, who’s truly American, mainstreams white supremacy and argues for an ethno-state where it’s white men that hold power and privilege. And it’s not that they believe that People of Color don’t belong. It’s that in their eyes we belong in the back of the bus, in the back of the kitchen, in the fields.

I’d like to say loudly and definitively, we’re not going back. Our cultures are too beautiful, our contributions are too great, our vision for the future is too vibrant to allow it to be taken away. And while stirring racial anxiety in the face of changing demographics might be their strategy to win elections and to hold onto power, increasingly everyday Americans hunger for a nation where all of us belong. Our thirst for belonging is greater than our fear of change.

And it’s up to us to find ways to have conversations that bridge difference and center our humanity. Immigrant and Native-born, Black and white, rural and urban, gay or straight. Courage is not the absence of fear, it’s moving forward in spite of it. And when we bring people together across difference, we forge a new majority of inclusion and understanding. And we might not be able to bring everyone along, but for those of us who believe in the promise of democracy, in the vision of liberty and justice for all, like, this is our shared purpose. And it starts with one

conversation and one step that leads to another. And I think I've got another 100 miles in me. How about you?

Thank you.

AUDIENCE: *Applause*

NED CALONGE: Fierce. Passionate. That was very great, thank you.

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: Thank you.

NED CALONGE: I, uh, I always get the advantage of leading off the question-and-answer session with being able to ask the first question, so . . . it doesn't mean it's a good question, it's just mine, so, um . . . I had so many thoughts but I, I kind of went back to your history and to the California Domestic Workers Coalition and the effort that led to passing the domestic worker bill of rights in California in 2013.

It's, I, I, I come back to that because it's such a concrete example of the ability, of the promise of community organizing in making really important policy change that fundamentally impacts the lives of many people. So I'm wondering if you look back on the campaign, were there any surprises or learnings that we could learn from as we move forward?

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: Yeah. Sure, I think there's two things that come to mind, uh, immediately on that. One is, um, we had to understand the history of why domestic workers were excluded from labor law. And when we were looking at, well, why is it that every other worker has the right to overtime or every other worker has all these other basic things, it was actually domestic workers and farm workers were excluded from the National Labor Relations Act in the 19--, the height of the U.S. labor movement as a concession to southern segregationists who didn't want--at that time it was primarily Black workers in the fields and in these roles, and they didn't want them to have access to those rights or the ability to form a union.

Um, and that, what's so interesting is that in California, that legacy of institutional racism was still in our laws. And that's true for many states across the country as we started to analyze and go state by state. And so I think when we started organizing, it was, like, understand-- like a deep sense of justice in history, but also I think what we found is, um, we couldn't, it wasn't like a traditional, like, us versus them.

Because our employers many times were families. Um, they were elders and, you know, these women who were working these jobs were the first to say, like, well I, you know, I, I don't wanna, I, I want to make sure that this person I'm taking care of is well taken care of. And so we actually had some people with disabilities come out against one of the earlier versions of the, the bill and it made us actually realize, well we have to deeply understand better what are the concerns and

the perspective of people with disabilities, of elders, of families that need nannies. And then were able to actually organize them to be on our side and go with us into the state capitol because we understood that every legislator that we were to go to lobby, probably had a nanny at home. Or a care worker taking care of their parents. And so I think it, it helped for me, like, for us to really push back on this notion that advocacy al--, you always have to have kind of an us versus them. And it mad--, complicated that a little bit in a really beautiful way.

NED CALONGE: That's great, I, I, I have to tell you, I, I heard a couple of things in there I wanted to lift up if that's okay. One is something we hear about over and over again. I have a colleague, Steve Woolf, at VCU, who's been very invested in the social determinants of health and thinking about a broader definition of health. And he says in, in order to move into a community and address the disparities and the inequities, you really have to understand the history. And I think we often overlook that history, because it's the roots of inequity and the roots of, um, unequal power and discrimination that we're working against that have kind of generated the culture of nati--, of nationalism that we're trying to work against. So that's one thing I heard that I wanted to lift up.

And the other one, which means so much to me, is the concept of inclusion and so your work, to make sure you were inclusive of another, um, identity that was felt to be less than, as you moved forward, is just really, um, inspirational. So I appreciate those comments.

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: Yeah. Thank you.

NED CALONGE; So, uh, sorry, I, I just had to comment on your great answer. So I'd like to open the field up to questions.

[ON-SCREEN AUDIENCE QUESTION]

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: It was very different for me because it, I, I lived in a farmworker community. And that wasn't my experience growing up in the United States. Um, and so I learned a lot about the kinds of challenges that farmworker communities face.

What I thought was really interesting about the region that I was in, it was, it was actually the region where a lot of people migrate from Bahia, the interior of Bahia to São Paulo, one of the big cities. It's a lot of internal migration in Brazil, and the people that I was working with are the poorest of the poor in the big cities, in the favelas. And a lot of, they had in--, there was so much internalized, uh, like devalorization of where they were from and of their culture and a lot of the work that we did was actually celebrating the, the music and the food and the people. I worked with a group of young people that were just really extraordinary, um, in their compassion and creativity, and I think for me, um, I, I came home just really committed and invested to working with and learning from communities in the United States and kind of doing my part.

But I think right now there's a lot of similarity because in Brazil their democracy was very new, it was a very young democracy, um, they've had a military dictatorship for so long that was brutal. Disappeared and killed so many people. And their democracy was really new and now they are also one of the countries that's experiencing someone with very authoritarian tendencies that's kind of risen to power, so, um, I do still keep in touch with some of my friends there and have been kind of sharing a little bit of the despair, frankly.

NED CALONGE: Thank you.

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: It actually makes me--just one more--it makes realize that democracy is so, um, it can be so fleeting. Like something that we think is so, like, just part of who we are is actually pretty fragile and I think that that's scary.

[ON-SCREEN AUDIENCE QUESTION]

I think one of the reasons why the women that I was working with were willing to mobilize and take, en--, engage in such courageous, like, acts, was really the way that they reinforced one another. Um, like there was no question that they were going to go to a rally to support Norma. You know, someone that they had shared, you know, so many experiences with and deeply understood kind of her pain. And you know I think that there was, uh, you know, one thing led to the next, you know, because there would be new women in the group and they're like, 'oh, I don't know, the march, whatever' and other women saying, like, 'no, come.'

Like to get, there's actually one story that always comes to mind for me is, we used to always have the women with the strollers in the front because otherwise they're like bumping up against people's, people's feet. And we were on this domestic worker rights march in, down Mission Street, one of the main kind of boulevards in San Francisco, and the police officer, like, kept trying to get us to turn onto a side street and be less disruptive to traffic.

And, you know, I was doing my best to just, 'I don't know, officer, it's the women and they're leading the march.' And this one woman, Marta, who, you know, she didn't have more than a second grade education, she was always, like, pretty quiet and pretty low self-esteem, she had these two beautiful twin boys and, you know, in that moment she just kind of like looked at the police officer and the police officer, like, made a sign of authority for her to, like, go this way and she just, like, kept on walking.

And it was, like, such a beautiful thing to witness because in her everyday life, like, she did not have power. In her everyday life with her husband, like at the school or just, like, on her own, but when it was, like, 200 of us, you know, like that feeling of, no, actually we do have power. And even if we don't vote, if we stay home from work, that hurts their businesses. I mean I think one of the most untold stories of the 2006, like, mass marches that happened, is the economic impact that that caused. Like, it was millions, or if not billions of dollars of impact when, you know, thousands and thousands of businesses across the country were closed for the day for

that general strike. And, um, so I mean I think there's, yes there's power in voting and everyone who can vote should for themselves and for all those who don't have that ability. But there's also economic power and there's also social power and we can't ignore those things.

[ON-SCREEN AUDIENCE QUESTION]

That's a great question. And one that could be answered so many ways. I'm sure by many people in this room. We were talking about this earlier, and I, I think two things I would say is, one, know what you need for yourself. For me it was coming to Colorado and having the opportunity to be out in those mountains and enjoying nature. Like, that gives me, like, grounding, and spending time with my family. But you know remembering, you know, to, to be in this work for the long haul, like, I have my commitment to the work but I also do have my commitments to my daughters and my family and to my partner and living a life with joy in it.

Um, I have a, a good friend and movement leader in south Florida, Maria, who added the middle name Alegría--which means joy--to her name to, like, be a constant reminder of how to cultivate joy in the work. And I think that that's something that I also learned from so many of the women who I worked with who experienced, like, really difficult things. Had survived civil wars and had gone through unimaginable horrors. But, you know, would sit in the kitchen, like, cooking tamales and laughing with one another, you know, and so I think how do we keep that, that spirit of music and dance and food, um, and that culture. Because I think just us being joyful is an act of resistance.

NED CALONGE: In, in a lot of the work in building community partnerships and building power in communities around the idea of improving health equity, um, there have been discussions about the importance of allowing space for healing, and, uh, I think maybe it ties back to the history? But as you think about the work in organizing and the way people are working in a space where it might be easy to get discouraged and weary, how do we create the best space for healing?

ANDREA CRISTINA MERCADO: I, I think I would say it's not just, yes there are individual practices that we hold for ourselves, but also how do we do that collectively? And you know, I think I've seen organizations and movements tackle that different ways. Sometimes it's, like, just making, like, actually we're not going to do a two-day planning retreat, we're just going to be together, um, and enjoy some good food in each other's company. How do we create time to actually grieve some of our losses, because they hurt, and I think sometimes we just kind of like, keep it moving and channel the, the pain and the anger into more work in a way that doesn't serve our, our bodies and our spirits.

Yeah, but I don't know, I'm always open to, to more ideas on this question. The group of young people in south Florida, the Dream Defenders who they actually just did a blackout. It's like this amazing, like, they just decided, like, no we're not going to post on social media and we're not gonna do, like, public events, we're just going to spend time, like, internally kind of processing

the work and our experiences and learning. Um, take time for reflection, so I think, you know, different organizations and movements have modeled it in different ways. But I do think that relationship--back to this theme of belonging--we all know our, our tendency is to isolate. And that what, what's actually good for us is to be in relationship. In healthy relationships. So, you know, I think the more that we can create spaces of belonging, the better for our movements and for ourselves.